

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Dangerous Addiction

Except on the fringes of opinion, no informed American any longer doubts that Soviet-supplied armies are using "yellow rain" in Southeast Asia, nor that the gases contain toxins outlawed by the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention. Yet the U.S. government has yet to file formal charges that the Soviets and their proxies have violated the treaty. Instead, President Ronald Reagan will tour Europe next week stressing his willingness to reach new arms agreements with the Soviets.

The American government's efforts, of course, have been crucial in exposing "yellow rain." It has sponsored both the collection of refugee interviews and the laboratory analysis that has identified mycotoxins derived from mold. Honest young officials bravely faced the evidence, and Secretary of State Haig was willing to go

teracting an accomplished evasion, and it may hesitate to jeopardize them." And finally, "The injured government may have to reach agreement with allies before it can react," and "All of the problems of domestic public opinion and partisan politics discussed above will be evident in the allied nations whose cooperation is required."

Mr. Ikle quoted Baldwin's explanation to Churchill on why Britain failed to react to Hitler's violations of the Versailles Treaty, a failure that helped usher in World War II. "You will remember the election at Fulham in the autumn of 1933, when a seat which the National Government held was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist," Prime Minister Baldwin said. "Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to the cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain."

Whither Arms Control?—III

An Editorial Series

out on a limb in his initial announcement in Berlin. Even the Carter administration compiled the refugee accounts dutifully, if quietly. There is much in the record to commend.

Yet the 1972 convention explicitly provides the procedures to follow in case of a violation. A complaint may be filed with the UN Security Council. An emergency conference of the signatories may be called by petition of a majority of them. These steps have not been implemented, even by the Reagan administration. No complaint has been filed with the Security Council, and no effort has been made toward a petition for an emergency conference.

As always, there are sophisticated excuses. While the Soviet Union is the only remotely plausible source of the mycotoxins, the powerful circumstantial evidence is not capped by a smoking gun. Some of the evidence comes from intelligence sources our government is reluctant to reveal. An investigation was asked not from the Security Council, where the Soviets have a veto, but from the General Assembly, which turned the matter over to a UN agency headed by a Russian.

The real reason our government has not followed the 1972 procedures is simply that they are too noisy. The preoccupation of the Reagan foreign policy, and of his pending trip to Europe, has been to persuade our European allies that Ronald Reagan is not a reckless cowboy, and the principal ploy has been lofty rhetoric about the great hope of arms control. A Security Council debate, ending in a Soviet veto, with the Europeans actually forced to choose sides, would disrupt the image-making. So it will be surprising if "yellow rain" is even mentioned in Mr. Reagan's four European speeches. Some aides are urging him to make a new proposal in each of them for new agreements with the same Soviets who callously shattered the Biological Weapons Convention.

"After Detection—What?" was the title of a brilliant Foreign Affairs article written 21 years ago by Fred Charles Ikle, who today is under secretary of defense for policy. He observed, "A potential violator of an arms-control agreement will not be deterred simply by the risk that his action may be discovered. What will deter him will be the fear that what he gains from the violation will be outweighed by the loss he may suffer from the victim's reaction to it."

"Democratic governments might experience serious political difficulties in reacting effectively to a detected evasion," Mr. Ikle predicted. "If evidence of the violation is equivocal or based on secret intelligence, the government may be reluctant to acknowledge the evasion or feel unsure of its ability to convince public opinion. For example, an admission that the control agreement had failed might be exploited at home by the political opposition."

"The injured government must be willing to increase military expenditures and to offend pacifist feelings," he added. "Public opinion may not approve, especially if the evasion occurred gradually." The injured government "may have embarked on long-range policies which seem more promising and important than coun-

In 1972, when the U.S. and the Soviets reached a treaty sharply limiting anti-missile systems, the worry was that without an ABM defense American land-based missiles might become vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. So an "interim agreement" was also negotiated limiting offensive weapons. Gerald Smith, the American negotiator, made a formal statement saying, "If an agreement providing for more complete strategic offensive arms limitations were not achieved within five years, U.S. supreme interests could be jeopardized. Should that occur, it would constitute a basis for withdrawal from the ABM Treaty." In ratifying the treaty, the U.S. Senate singled out this "stated policy," specifically adding that withdrawal would be triggered if there were no further agreement and "the survivability of the strategic deterrent forces of the United States were to be threatened as a result."

Ambassador Smith also made a unilateral statement intended to rectify the treaty's lack of a definition of a "heavy missile" subject to limitation. A heavy missile was one larger than current "light" missiles, he asserted. Ignoring this, the Soviets deployed their larger SS-19. The survivability of our Minuteman deterrent has now become vulnerable, just as feared in 1972. We live, in other words, under precisely the conditions our negotiators and the Senate said would force us to withdraw from the ABM treaty.

In the Arms Control and Disarmament Act, Congress also specified that no obligations to limit arms should be undertaken "except pursuant to the treaty-making power of the President under the Constitution or unless authorized by further affirmative legislation by the Congress of the United States." Yet when time for renewal of the "interim agreement" came, it was extended without congressional action, through an invention called a "Parallel Unilateral Policy Declaration," or PUPD.

So, far from withdrawing from the 1972 treaty and defending its deterrent missiles with an ABM, as it threatened and promised when the treaty was negotiated, the U.S. is currently abiding by all arms control agreements—formal, expired and unratified. Not only the ABM treaty, but the interim agreement, and the unratifiable SALT II agreement as well. This policy, it seems, is about to be reaffirmed by Ronald Reagan, who was elected President in no small part to achieve a firmer foreign policy.

Arms control, the record says, can be a dangerous addiction. We have allowed not only our deployments but, more importantly, our thinking to be constrained by both the letter and the spirit of arms control treaties. The Soviets have gone blithely on, through evasion and violation, building military advantage after military advantage. Arms control, like narcotics, has its place. But at the moment we seem to be hooked, unable to break the habit. Arms treaties have become a goal in themselves, even if they bear no relation—indeed even if they inhibit—their supposed goal of enhancing our national security.